

## PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Homicide is the fourth leading cause of death for U.S. children 1 to 9 years of age, the fifth leading cause of death for children 10 to 14 years of age, and the second leading cause of death for youth 15 to 24 years of age.
- Homicide and suicide combined account for 29% of deaths among youth.
- Every day in the United States, an average of 17 Americans ages 24 years and younger die as victims of homicide.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC's National Academic Centers of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention work with communities to address the public health problem of youth violence. Five centers focus on developing and implementing community response plans, training healthcare professionals, and conducting small pilot projects to evaluate effective strategies for preventing youth violence. The other five centers conduct more comprehensive activities, including researching risk factors for youth violence and evaluating prevention strategies. The centers are located at Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of California at San Diego, the University of California at Riverside, the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Michigan, Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University and University of Hawaii.

CDC's National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center is a Web-based source of information and materials on preventing violence and suicide among our nation's youth. The resource center is a collaborative effort between the Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, and other federal agencies. To date, more than 21,000 publications have been ordered. Sections include critical information aimed at helping children and youth cope with disaster, youth violence news highlights from around the United States, and fact sheets addressing bullying, aggression, depression, community interventions, and school violence.

### *Example of Program in Action*

The Thompson Island Outward Bound CHOICES Project, a project of the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center (HYVPC), works with middle school students in Boston to reduce interpersonal conflict, violence, and drug use by helping students learn to make positive choices in their school, home, and social lives. The intervention involves a 9-week "character education" curriculum facilitated by two Outward Bound instructors. Another intervention project helps physicians understand and deal with youth violence. In this project, each pediatrician in the state receives a handbook on youth violence prevention and access to a related Web page. The results of the project will help determine the usefulness of the materials and whether physicians find the materials instrumental in changing knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors of participating youth.

The University of Michigan's Flint Youth Violence Prevention Center (YVPC) is governed by a steering committee composed of representatives from community organizations. The YVPC promotes healthy development through collaboration among community, university, and health department partners. The YVPC Photovoice Project brought together young people from around Flint to generate dialogue about their own experiences and perceptions of the root causes and solutions for violence in their communities. Photovoice participants strengthen their own voices through a collective process of sharing photographs and writings about issues that matter to them.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue studying ways to improve the adoption of effective youth violence prevention programs at national, state, and local levels. CDC will continue its collaborative efforts to clarify the relationship between youth violence and other forms of violence and to identify prevention strategies that effectively address multiple forms of violent behavior.